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Sir:

"I want you to trust my judgment and powers of discrimination," Ron Rosenbaum writes in your November issue in which in your sycophancy you and he treat that most subversive of crimes, the assassination of a President, as an appropriate subject of jesting and ridicule on its 20th anniversary.

This is hideous, obscene and irresponsible. It also is the complete abdication of the responsibility of writers and editors, whose proper role in a society like ours is to examine how our basic institutions worked or failed to work in such times of great crisis and thereafter, not whitewash and cover up for them.

It is just as good that Rosenbaum did not demand trust in his facts, because in even minor detail they cannot be trusted. This matches his display of his "judgment" and "powers of discrimination."

His greatest "respect" is for Josiah Thompson, particularly his "methods." (page 265) Whether this is for his literary light-fingers with what had already been published by others, one "method," or his theorizing, Rosenbaum does not say. Perhaps it was for Thompson's theorizing of three simultaneous and entirely unrelated conspiracies to give the Saturday Evening Post something not in the book he promoted with that piece?

In your supposed subject expert's "respect" Jones Harris is only slightly behind Thompson (Page 157) because Harris is such a "meticulous investigator." Unfortunately, Rosenbaum does not give any detail or illustration. Is it because Harris was a closet Nixonian meticulously misrepresenting himself as close to and working with Robert Kennedy's people? Or because he misled many by his "meticulous investigation" showing that (the sick and later confined) Jim Hicks was the conspiracy's "communications" man in Dealey Plaza - right out in the middle of the street so he could be photographed? Or because Harris fabricated the despicable quote he attributed to Robert Kennedy, that he was not critical of the official mythology because there were "too many guns between me and the White House." Is "meticulous investigator" really adequate to describe Harris?

Did it not strike any of your editors as at all odd that in this supposedly definitive (to say nothing of fair) account of who is "still on the case" - all "buffs" to you - Rosenbaum bestowed his high praise only on those who are not "still on the case?" "Whether they have anything worth saying" (page 156) likewise is limited to those he ridicules.

Is it at all possible that Rosenbaum has no knowledge of all the serious, successful and ongoing research? Or that not one of your editors does? He makes no mention of any, does not even suggest that it exists, and none of you thought to ask him?

The truth is that he is well aware of this but that his "judgment" and "powers of discrimination" told him that if he made any reference to it he would torpedo himself. So he just left it out - his "method" of "investigation."

Indirectly he manages to refer to the availability of "100,000 pages of declassified documents" he fails to report are now in the FBI's public reading room. In his and your definitive account there is no reference to how they got there, or to the many FOIA threats and suits that forced them and much more to light. (page 262) Actually, there are many more than 100,000 pages, of which Ranftel examined some in the FBI's reading room, and they are not "declassified documents." They were merely suppressed until some whose concern is research and fact, not those "real investigators," Thompson and Harris, forced them out.

Or do you and Rosenbaum want your readers to believe that they came from Penn Jones' sewer, to which you both devote most of your attention and space?

Your expert who demands "trust in my judgment and powers of discrimination" does manage to refer to the Charles Bronson film (else how could he ridicule Gary Mack and Earl Golz?) and of it to report no more than that the FBI said only that they found "nothing of interest" in it. (page 262)

Those records were disclosed in my C.A. 78-0322, which is still in court after 5 years. And what Rosenbaum - and you - cover up is what the FBI actually said: that the motion pictures "failed to show the building from which all the shots were fired" when it has about 100 individual pictures of it and the so-called sniper's window and that the 35mm stills, which "did depict the President's car at the precise time the shots were fired", were of no value because "the pictures were not sufficiently clear for identification" of Oswald!

Before the investigation was really begun the FBI decided that Oswald fired all the shots from one window of that building. So, if crime scene movies do show the building but do not have Oswald in that window, they are valueless - if evaluated only for usefulness in making a case against him.

Thus also Rosenbaum does not fault the FBI for rejecting as valueless still pictures that include the President and his car and much more "at the precise time the shots were fired." After all, why should the FBI want pictures of the President in the midst of his assassination if Oswald is not in them, either? These photos of the President being killed are so utterly valueless the Dallas FBI did not bother to report even their existence to headquarters.

So you can be satisfied, even if your trust-demanding report of self-touted good "judgment and powers of discrimination" did not find space for it in all those many pages you gave him, that there was an immediate and unchanged FBI preconception that Oswald was a lone nut assassin, I attach the earliest of its records reflecting its decision not to consider any other suspect or even the possibility of a conspiracy - on the very day of the assassination and even before Oswald was charged.

In other and minor details Rosenbaum is inaccurate, a less significant fault in his literary whoring about so serious an event, so frightful a tragedy from which the entire world still suffers. Examples:

That "sudden appearance" of "bootleg copies of the Zapruder film" was not "in the seventies" but in 1968.

It was not "one of the anti-Castro activists" Oswald had been "soliciting," if that describes what he was doing, but three. This is one of the best-known and least questioned facts relating to Oswald in New Orleans. All four were arrested at the same time. And after arrest Oswald did not offer to "inform on the pro-Castro movement," which did not even exist in New Orleans. (Even though Rosenbaum says that Oswald did establish a chapter of it, which he didn't.)

Rosenbaum says that the Commission was "never able to resolve" the matter of Oswald's use of the 544 Camp Street address. Honest and accurate reporting would have stated that it and the FBI made no real effort to do so.

That special garage, to Rosenbaum the "Crescent Street Garage," was the Crescent City Garage. (For all the time he spent in New Orleans not learning anything the least a diligent investigator might have picked up is that New Orleans is known as the Crescent City.) The "testimony" to which Rosenbaum refers was not testimony and it was not by the "mechanic" at the garage. It was by the owner, Adrian Alba, who made the statement quoted to private persons, not the Commission, before which he did not testify.

You magnify Rosenbaum's many and inexcusable sins by describing all those who do not agree with the official mythology as living and having lived "lives similar in many ways to that of their most illusive prey - Oswald himself." Have you no shame, no shred of decency?

You and Rosenbaum could not even keep the order of appearance of critical books straight, or had your own purposes in not doing so. Epstein's was not the first based on the Warren Report. Or the second. My first (of six of which you mention only one) dates to August 1965. It was followed by Sylvan Fox's "Unanswered Questions." It was then republished nine months later. After that, Epstein's appeared.

Of all the things Rosenbaum could have said about me, he said only that I am a "goose farmer and former government investigator." Neither is correct, although I did raise a few geese and did basic behavioral work with them similar to that of Konrad Lorenz. I was, officially, the best chicken farmer in the country, after I found making a living doing as Rosenbaum does too distasteful. I then was also a chicken-cooking champion and the "national barbecue king." Rather than being a "government investigator," I was a Senate investigator, an investigative reporter and a (decorated) intelligence analyst.

Rosenbaum's and your excuse for this disgusting prostitution of journalism is that you and he are going to "look at who's still on the case after twenty years and whether or not they have anything worth saying." (page 156) He didn't even ask me if I knew of, and neither he nor you make a single reference to, anything at all serious or to the many successful efforts that brought to light "anything worth saying" or even how this has been done or by whom.

After reading Rosenbaum's cheap shots, I can well understand why he had no interest in asking me for all the time he kept me on the phone. I could hardly be up to his needs because, after all, I have forced the government to disclose to me only about a half-million pages of the records the Rosenbaums of this world and magazines like yours have no interest in.

The Freedom of Information Act was amended - over the veto of former Warren Commissioner Gerald Ford - because of one of my JFK assassination FOIA suits and this is what opened all those closets of FBI and CIA dirty linen and their assassination files. Such insignificant matters, when there are black dogs to bark at, are hardly worth a "look at" and not "anything worth saying" a word about.

I give this to Penn Jones: he got Rosenbaum down in the sewer, and that is where he belongs.

Harold

Harold Weisberg